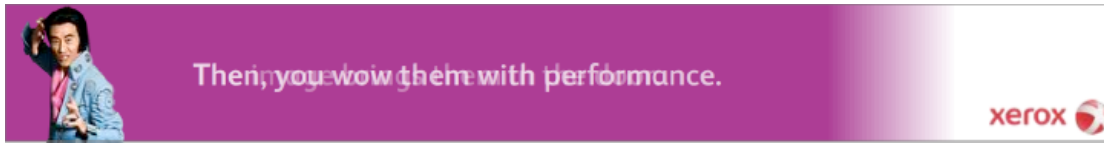


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## An upward Spiral

Oct 1, 2007 12:00 PM, By AP staff

Rapid Bind's John Goché saw a great opportunity when he purchased a fledgling three-person operation in 1980, but he never could have foreseen how the business would grow. The Portland, Oregon-based bindery was established in 1977 with just two people and some used equipment occupying a humble 1,500-sq.-ft. rental space.

Thirty years after opening, Rapid Bind Inc. has evolved into a thriving postpress service provider with more than 40 employees. The original modest space has been replaced with 34,000 sq. ft. housing state-of-the-art equipment. And although the company's tongue-in-cheek slogan still is, "Our business is folding," its services have expanded over the years to include mechanical binding, gluing and attaching, die-cutting, saddlestitching and much more.

Now Goché is semi-retired and Rapid Bind is in the capable hands of three partners who oversee day-to-day operations. Each partner entered at a different time and brought unique strengths to the venture.

Sue Hein came on board in 1985 and learned the business from the ground up, applying her experience in accounting and administrative management. She became a partner in 1992, and took on the role of company president in 2004. Russ Haines, Rapid Bind's vice president of production, has a lifetime of experience in the graphic arts industry stretching back to the early 1970s. After joining in 1989 and stepping up to plant manager in 1998, Haines entered the partnership in 2001. Chris Garvey, long involved in the creative process at Rapid Bind as lead die-maker and pressman, became a partner and vice president last year.

The management team at Rapid Bind continues to look for ways to expand service for its customers. Most recently, the partners added an inkjet imaging system to enhance value-added services for direct-mail clients. But, the standard bread-and-butter binding and finishing services still are the most requested.

Rapid Bind added machinery last year to expand the plastic spiral binding segment of its operations. Two more punches and four semi-automatic coil inserters have increased capacity for plastic spiral projects and reduced production time for projects with longer runs.

### WHERE WIRE-O AND SPIRAL INTERSECT

Recently, Rapid Bind produced a unique project that illustrates the versatility of plastic spiral (pictured). Although the original plan started out as a Wire-O project, Rapid Bind did an additional estimate for plastic spiral. In the end, plastic spiral better suited the design, and the change was made. One major consideration was that only 1,200 books would be produced.

Rapid Bind's client presented this marketing project for an upscale door manufacturer. It called for binding on both sides of the book. The book's front cover was designed with two deep-blue gate panels that met in the middle and swung open from each side, like saloon doors. Underneath the front panels were 14 full-size pages, each with an image of various doors for a stately home, and opening from both the left and the right. Center die-cut squares in the middle of some pages allowed different doors to show through.

Several elements made this a complex and challenging project. The sheets had



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to be collated together in groups of six and stacked perfectly for the center die-cut, so absolute precision was essential. All the die-cut windows had to match perfectly to reveal the images underneath. To make matters more interesting, Rapid Bind had just four days to turn the job around — over a major holiday weekend. Every facet of the project, including die making, die-cutting, collating, punching and binding was executed in that brief period.

The result was a 7 × 9-inch book with 6mm plastic coil, a piece of marketing collateral that would garner attention and reflect well on the customer.

“This was very much a collaborative effort,” Haines says about the production. “It took a lot of communication in the planning process, and the skilled coordination and expertise of our staff.”

## PLASTIC SPIRAL POINTERS

Hein says plastic spiral is colorful, versatile and resilient — qualities that make it ideal for projects such as cookbooks, children’s books, calendars and technical manuals. Available in a broad spectrum of colors including PMS tones, customers can special order shades to match their projects. It not only allows books to lay flat and fold 360 degrees, but plastic spiral is crush-resistant and reportedly doesn’t scratch other objects or surfaces. But, as with any type of binding method, certain considerations will help smooth the path to success.

## KEEP PUNCHING IN MIND

Holes must be punched in the sheets for plastic spiral insertion, so remember to leave a 3/8-inch margin on the binding edge to avoid punching into copy.

## STEER CLEAR OF CROSSOVERS

If your design includes crossovers (images that jump across the gutter onto both pages), plastic spiral might not be your best choice. Pages in plastic spiral books will “step up” when opened, leaving the pages out of line with one another. This step-up is very noticeable if your design has horizontal bars or lines as a key design element.

## EXPENSE

Plastic spiral typically is most economical for short-run projects. For longer runs, Wire-O might be more cost-efficient. Although plastic spiral can be ordered in any PMS color, doing so can be prohibitively expensive for short and medium runs.

Despite these special considerations, plastic spiral is a highly desirable choice, because it combines malleable durability with an attractive appearance. Plastic spiral often is thought to have a more casual look than other forms of mechanical binding, such as Wire-O, but it can be used for an elegant contemporary appeal, as well.

## SPIEL CELEBRATES MILESTONES

Spiel Associates invented the first automatic plastic coil inserter 10 years ago and, at Graph Expo 07, invited its customers to celebrate. Coilmaster owners were welcomed with champagne cocktails at Spiel’s booth. “They have been so supportive of us going through the growing pains of developing new technology that we thought this would be a small way to thank them,” says David Spiel. “It’s also our 40th Chicago show, so I thought we’d celebrate.”

“It’s a sobering thought that, 10 years ago, plastic coil could only be inserted manually,” David adds. “In January 1997, we all went to E & M Bindery (Clifton, NJ) to see how the first Coilmaster was operating. It blew us away,” declares Saul Spiel. “It was running at about 500 books per hour, and it was not a thin book; it was ¼ inch thick.”

Still, there were improvements to be made. The first Coilmaster had no spreader. This meant that the margin (the distance between the first hole and the head or foot of the book) could not exceed the bridge (the distance between the holes).

“We knew we had to come up with something,” says Saul Spiel. “Rather than have everyone buy brand new dies and hope that the pattern fit within the confines of the book, we came up with a spreading device,” he explains. This patented device causes the coil to jump into the first and out of the last hole, even if the margin is larger than the pitch. “The spreader caused a quantum leap in the quality of the books. Binders no longer had to trim the books down, use oval holes or punch close to the edge. This technology is now on all Coilmaster models, including The Coilmaster Jr., the first automatic tabletop coil inserter.” The Coilmaster Jr. binds from the first hole onward, then cuts and crimps automatically at up to 500 books per hour at any pitch. No tooling is required to perform changeovers.

Then came the Sterling Coilmaster II in-line system, which forms the coil prior to insertion. “That really sped things up,” says David Spiel, “and it saved our

customers a bundle of money on plastic and labor.”

See [www.spielassociates.com](http://www.spielassociates.com).

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